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SKETCHES IN VERSE

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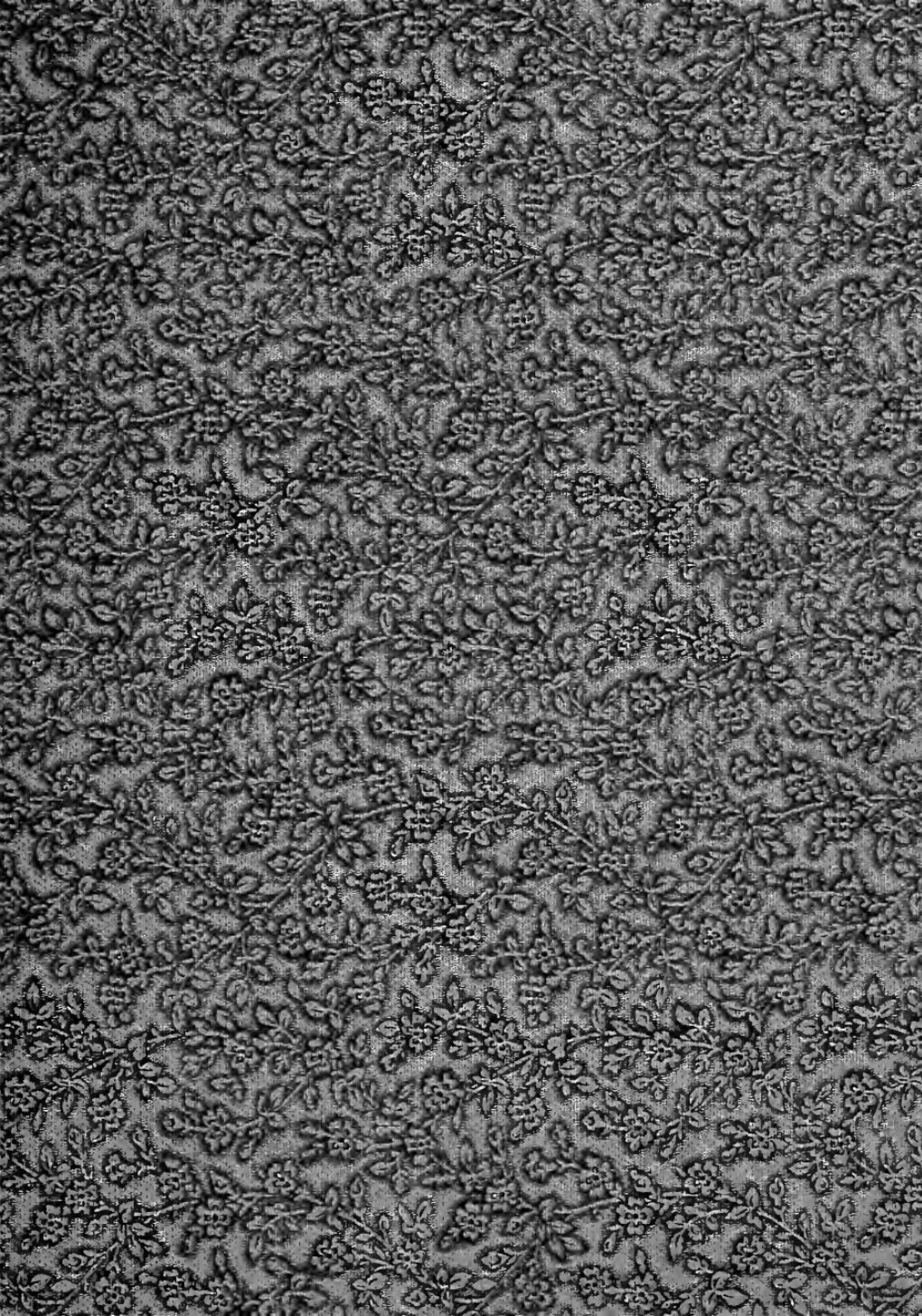
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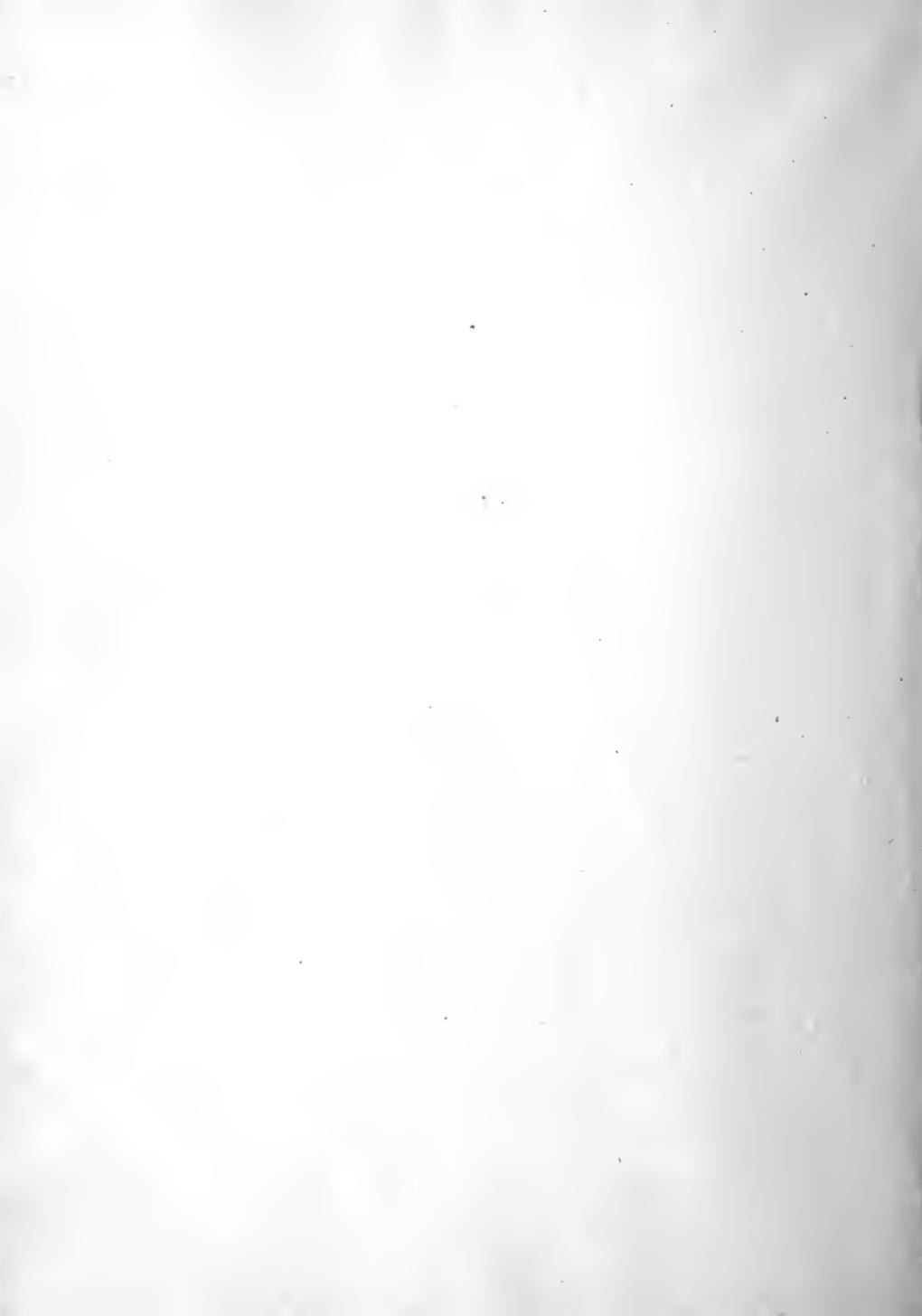
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Clarence Crane -



SKETCHES IN VERSE,

BY

CLARENCE CRANE.



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W. J. S.
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To

Miss Abby Trafford.

NOTE.—Some of the sketches of this collection were contributed to the “The New York Advertiser,” “Bunker Hill Times,” “Brooklyn Eagle,” and “New York Clipper.” Others appear now for the first time.—C. C.

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THE KINGDOM OF PREJUDICE.

We scanned his insane escapades and peered
Beneath the frail veneer of confidence.

We bantered baseness but to view the vein,
Nor found one latent grain of reverence.

He is as vicious as Damaetas was ;
As flexible a fool as Pretty Pete.

His future's like to be the mildewed ghost
Of the sour yesterday of his career.

THE OLD PLAY.

We are pleased with the good old fashioned play,
Where even the underling has his day ;
Where villainy fails, and prodigals find,
Far more tempting dinners than husks and rind.
Where Damozel Sorrow stares in amaze,
Perceiving that life has a few fair days :
Where the *good* survive and the *evil* die,
And devils slip on the peel of a lie.
Where Pharisees seek Samaritans' feet,
And friendship is fruitful and love concrete ;
Where all events are as they ought to be,
When Satan is under the Hero's knee.
Some reckon, that the good old fashioned play,
Like "Bric-a-brac Lyre," has had its day.
Old customs come, 'tho oft we say "good-bye ;"
Old faults arise, and never choose to die :
Old skeletons of scandal still appear,
All things dilapidated are not dear.
Yet ever Fate, mindful of the past,
Returns us to some fair old love at last.

TALE OF A HUMMING BIRD'S NEST.

Deep lined with down and cotton,
This baby nest you see,
Was once a little dwelling
Built in an old oak tree.

With moss and lichen mottled,
It seemed a knot of oak,
Half hid by grizzled branches,
A halcyon realm, remote.

Two cherished eggs it compassed,
Two perfect jewels white ;
And God, who loveth all things,
Bade Nature screen the sight.

But Nature left unfinished
The task, and strayed away ;
Then came an idle youngster,
Who climbed the tree in play.

Soon from a high position,
Quick eyed, the nest he viewed ;
O'er "Alps" of limbs he clambered
Aud wrought a pillage rude.

* * * *

Many the nests we fashion,
Ever with hopes bestow ;
Comes adversity's youngster
Laughing, and lays them low.

OUR GARRET.

We dwell in a den, dismantled and old ;
'Mid debris of rubbish and cob-web mold.
Crazily raftered over-head,
An unswept floor and a ragged bed :
And a crater-like portal leading down
To the landlady, who with poristic frown,
Lieth in wait, in her slovenly gown.
Her heart, we know, is as old and as cold
As the gusty garret filled with mold ;
And faith and pity in her are as dead
As the dust in the littered room o'erhead.
Doth the rose exposed to the winter's blast,
Bloom more fair ? Doth its perfume last ?
Its petals wither, its odors depart,
When sold at auction in Poverty's mart.
We of the attic, quaint but cold,
Cater to castles of rubbish and mold ;
Poverty's power must pass away ;
Sunshine and summer shall come some day ;
And Hope's ancient anchor will hold us fast,
'Till garret and winter and want are past.

GOLDEN ROD.

(TO ADA BYRON COOMBS.)

Golden flower and fairy rod, rising from the way-side sod,

Rock and bow ye to the wind, wand of wood-nymph, magic kind.

Yellow tassels nodding low, bend ye, swing ye to and fro ;

Light your burnished fringes fling, while the zephyrs, wooing, sing.

Purest melody that floats, vocalized in silvery notes ;
Slow in whispers die away, half unsung the Circean lay.

Circling Time in fashion old garners all his floral gold ;

Glancing, spares thee to the last, till the Summer sun has past.

When dreams of Spring, dearly cherished, iris-tinted, all have perished,

And last Autumn winds pass, sighing, Golden Rod is bare and dying.

GREAT GRANDFATHER'S MATCH BOX.

Blasè and battered, old brass case,
With hinges lacking oil of grace,
You conjure up an antique time,
Days of grandfather's father's prime.
Servitor ancient, seeking rest,
How many squibs have known thy breast ;
Transient guests to burn old papers,
To light fond pipes and bed-time tapers?
Years ago you were gilded, no doubt,
Carried to soiree, ball and rout ;
But pristine joys must pass away,
Even as great grandfather's day :
And leave exposed old age and brass,
To show how generations pass.
Strange you appear to now-a-days' eyes,
Yet though you boast too ample size
For matches of the present time,
I'll treasure you for "auld lang syne."
By laws ancestral, good and true,
Grandfather's father lives again in you.

A REALIZATION.

Yes, I know I am twenty to-morrow,
And I feign would forget the fact,
For I cannot but think with sorrow
That lost years never retract.

I've lived in a "ramshackle" manner
In a land of delightful haze ;
Where activity's iron hammer
Disturbs not the idler's ways.

From fortune's fickle ocean
Barks have touched on this dreamy shore ;
But I slept under pleasure's potion
In sight of reality's door.

I called on a friend to borrow
A novel to while away time,
And she said : " You are twenty to-morrow ;"
And I cannot get rid of the line.

Yes, I know I am twenty to-morrow,
Yet I feign would forget the fact
For I cannot but think with sorrow
That lost years never retract.

THE BLACK SHEEP.

Forever he wanders, no one knows where ;
Still old Mother loves him, and love is prayer.
Still cherished by her his name doth lie,
A sunset of grief in memory's sky.
Will winters and summers of gray and gold
Return the prodigal into the fold ?
Peacefully, dreamlessly, dear ones sleep
Under frail flowers that vigils keep ;
And only the wistful shepherdess old,
Lingers in love in the sorrowful fold.
Why must he tarry 'till she doth lie
Where frail regrets merely meet the eye ?
Why should he hesitate—why should he roam
When sweet forgiveness beckons him home ?
Where the dear heart, like the swinging door,
Bids him enter and wander no more.

VIOLETS.

On the meadow's mossy margin,
 Grow in clusters, white and blue,
Spring's fair promises of summer—
 Violets dipped in saintly dew.

Close beside the little river,
 Swollen by the April showers ;
Where the banks form fairy pillows,
 Dwell the dainty little flowers.

Here the gentle maiden Chloris
 Watches o'er in rapt delight,
All the babies of the meadow,
 Violets blue and violets white.

Promises they are of summer,
 Deeper than prophetic words,
Of the bursting of the blossoms ;
 Of the advent of the birds.

Lowly flowers in the meadow ;
 Violets white, and violets blue ;
Yet they stand as faithful pledges,
 That the summer shall come true.

ABSENCE.

She is away; the thought is born of tears.
She is away; my heart is faint with fears.
Hope, Joy and Rest have fled to distant skies
And left Love's lonely hours and broken ties.
There is a rain that comes at dead of night
And sobs upon the roof as if in fright ;
Seeming like some dead friend returned to stay
And mourn with me because—she is away.
She is away; is she unhappy, too ?
She is away; will Faith burn just as true ?
If she returns her kiss will banish pain ;
Till then my soul sobs, lonely, with the rain.

A GRAY BOAT.

A gray old derelict she lay,
Beside the barren sea ;
And brokenly the evening breeze,
Whispered her tale to me.

Reposing with bow toward sunset,
With stern to rising seas ;
I scanned her melancholy state,
The rumors of disease.

Appearing like one forsaken
In second childhood's maze ;
Hearing in vain that old refrain,
“The light of other days.”

Soon will the broken billows gnaw ;
Anon the slavish tide,
Garnish with moss the greedy cracks,
Hollow a grave, beside.

Peace to your spirit, gray old boat !
Yet when the waves burn red,
You sorrow for the ocean, lost,
And hate your sandy bed.

Could I burden with empty hopes,
With wishes wise but vain ;
Banish all selfish retrospect,
Soon would I break thy chain.

Then ocean would vanquish the shore,
Sobbing in soft delight ;
And hushing thy sighs on his bosom,
Bear thee into the night.

THE GRAND CIRCUIT.

Two rubies in a ring she gave and lisped,
“Thus are our hearts in Love’s sweet circlet
bound.”

Two days agone, I met a man who said,
“That ring you wear I gave to her you love,
It was my wife’s, she died a year ago.”
I loved her not, so passed the gift to him.

OLD GLOBE THEATRE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Old playhouse ! with the rain discolored sills,
Decked with the fragments of the last show's bills,
As though a troupe of pickers of the rag
Had ornamented thee with tattered tag ;
Before the Civil War's disheveled din
Had cradled all the land in sanguine sin,
Thy red lights, each like Salamander's eye,
Did fascinate the aimless passer by.
Many an actor, Globe, who scorns you now,
Made from your boards his first professional bow.
Escaping time, fire, malice of the mob,
Thy timbers yet must feel destruction's prod.
But you are more than worthy of a verse—
A panegyric of your course rehearse.
Grace to your ghost, and might each leveled beam
Burn in Bohemian grate with friendly gleam.

LONGINGS.

Longings are phantom sighs
That break from the sensitive soul ;
That tremor the burden that lies
On the heart like an infinite dole.

They are embers of hope, and glow
And die in a passing breath;
They are ashes we feign would throw
Into the river of Death.

They are faded blossoms discovered
'Twixt the leaves of the heart's old tome;
In a drift of failures smothered,
They lie in their hopeless home.

But their incense oft doth arise
And troubles the sensitive soul ;
And tremors the burden that lies
On the heart like an infinite dole.

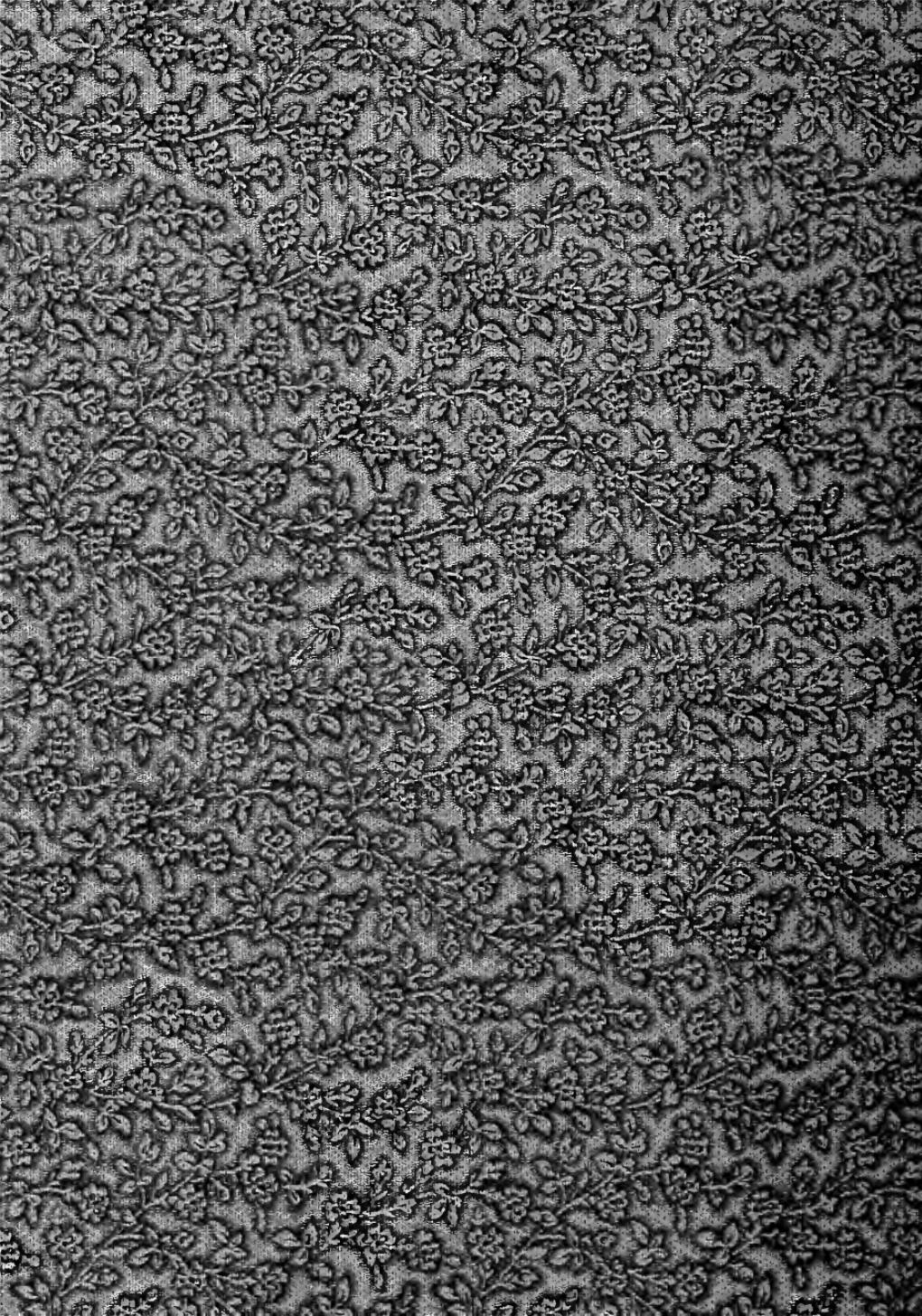
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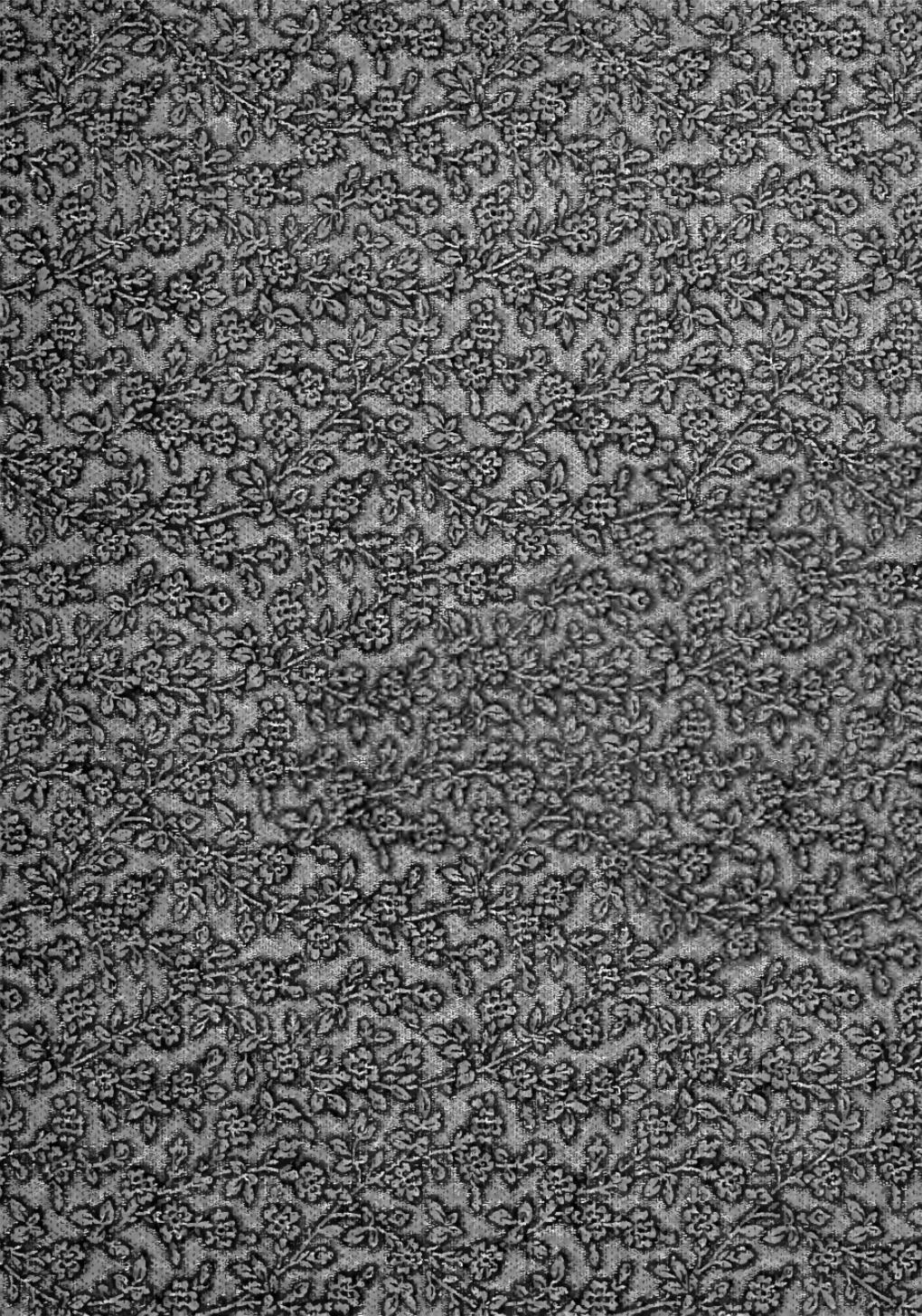
We'll have a real nice time again
When Larry stars a show,
When Bill scores South America,
And when we hear old Joe
Ever quoting, quoting Shakspeare
Between his cigarettes,
We'll have a real nice time again,
Since gift-lead weights our nets.

We'll have a real nice time once more
When floating isles that lie
Outlined in friendship's horoscope,
At even-tide draw nigh ;
When summers laid in lavender
Banquet at mem'ry's *fāme* ;
We'll have a real nice time once more,
When sunlight soothes the rain.

If Shylock gets us "on the hip"
Our dreams will augur stars ;
We may not have a real nice time,
Our hopes may fill rose-jars,
Yet Buenos Ayres and the show,
And Enoch's novels, aye,
Will find kind critic in old Joe
Who never limned a lie.







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